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out chunks of flesh, and can even [180] be of some slim service, similar to that which is told concerning that fellow in the "Ricciardetto." It is an ovoid, laterally flattened fish. The ray is round, vertically flattened and has three barbs on its tail. It can make a very painful and dangerous wound with the middle barb when the fish is stepped on and lashes out with its tail. Some grow to be over a meter in diameter. It lies on the bottom of quiet pools, as close as it can to the bank; it would seem to be viviparous. The yacaré, a kind of crocodile, will without warning bite the leg or arm of an unfortunate father, drag him to the bottom and there devour him.

So it is that bathing, which was so necessary to cool ourselves off in the suffocating heat, was always embittered by the presence of these maneaters.

The married woman is faithful to her husband by inclination, 83] education and fear. There are tales of terrible revenges wreaked by husbands upon their unfaithful wives, over whom they have power of life and death. While they are single they can be and often are free in their ways. It cannot be doubted that the whites attract their inter- 60] est, if matters of racial difference do not intervene, for the poorest white is always in a position to give better presents than is the richest chief.

These women love decorations and clothing, but have no use for 29] skirts or corsets. They wrap themselves from the waist down in a blanket, and hold it up with a belt or cord which is hidden behind the fold of cloth. In addition to this they know how to distribute these rags in such a way as to accentuate their good figure and yet at the same time not encumber themselves, a skill not to be expected on first seeing them. Their dress consists of robes, and when they have any they put them all on, be it winter or summer, partly because of the nomadic existence they lead and partly because they like to do so. One might say that the saying: what wards off cold also wards off heat, is particularly applicable to them.

Both men and women love bright colors (particularly red) and [822] variety, but they also like white cloth. When they put on any garment they always do so in such a way as to leave one arm free. The women have a high regard for the kind of shirts which we wear.

The women make their own ornaments out of leather and broken 30] ● shells, achieving a certain elegance of form, though with a greater 29] or lesser degree of rusticity. They wear, from childhood, a sort of

leather bracelet, which they continue to wear until, it is said, they give it to the first man who wins their favor. They knit shirts out of twine or in double thickness, very closely knit and yet elastic, which look like coats of mail and have no sleeves, and are garnished in various patterns with pieces of clam shell. These shirts are particularly useful [181] in their fights and as protection against the thorns of the forest, but the Indians have only a few of them.

Other ornaments are made of feathers, especially of the ostrich [rhea--Translator], with which the women deck their foreheads, waists, shoulders, wrists and ankles. The men put on much the same gear when they are about to fight, go to feasts or to treat a sick person, as will later be shown.

The women themselves also weave the wool gathered from the few sheep they possess and arrange the natural wool colors in regular patterns of stripes or squares. They do not know how to make more ornamental figures.

In order to weave they stick four forked pieces of wood into the ground in the form of a rectangle, place a pole across each end to which they affix the warp threads and with a wooden blade about a hand breadth long thread and tamp the wool into place.

They call "weaving" potzin; the "loom" noccaléi, and the "threads" huoléi. These words, which have not the least affinity with the corresponding Spanish words, assure us that the Indians did not learn weaving from the Spaniards -- not that one should lay great stock either by similarities or by the lack of them in words to buttress a judgment of this nature (on the contrary, it happens that the Mataco always do all they can to keep from adopting foreign words to express new things, preferring to use their own words with small changes) but the fact of the matter is that we are not here confronted by one of these circumlocutions. Another possible cause for error might be found in the great difficulty which they have to pronounce words as we do. Furthermore there is the habit of taking Spanish words and modifying them to suit their own language as when they make from "cabra" [goat--Translator] caila, and from Pedro, Peiló.

All work having to do with carrying, making tents, making pots, cooking, weaving, looking for roots and making nets, is women's work. Hunting, fishing, the making of weapons, warring, are men's business. Looking for honey in the forests, where it is abundant, and collecting fruit are activities common to both sexes. I suppose that

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A settlement of Mataco Indians. Mataco-Nocténes. Bolivia.

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A Mataco Indian dressed in a caraguatá shirt.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913) 1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

the body of some animal. The magical nature of these ornaments was likewise obvious.

Among the *Mataco*, who in general are more addicted to religion and superstition than the Choroti, the character of facial painting as a magical charm is more conspicuous. These Indians give facial painting different names according as it is used by men or women and depending on its colour. Thus the red painting of women is called *eruhák*, whereas the red painting of the men is called *ovaittáh* (a name evidently derived from the word *aittáh* demon). The black painting is called *letáh*. It is especially used as a sign of sorrow. When a Mataco man dies, his widow and daughters blacken their faces with charcoal, regarding this as a protection against the death-demon. Similarly, for some time after a death the younger men every evening perform the dance *Katináh*, and all those taking part in the dance have their faces blackened. — The red painting again is applied as a means of giving the body strength and as a direct protection against evil spirits causing sickness.

Many *personal ornaments* of the Chaco Indians, for instance ear-tubes, necklaces, feather ornaments etc., are of the nature of charms or amulets against evil spirits. The feather ornaments most customary among the Chaco tribes are ostrich plumes, and these, as I have shown in my *Civilization of the South American Indians* have originally not been decorations in the civilized sense of the word, but magical charms, a character which they still preserve for instance among such tribes as the Chamacoco and Lenguas in Paraguay. Among the Choroti, who likewise at their great feasts in December and January wear great ostrich plumes as ornaments, this is not equally conspicuous in accordance with the fact that in many cases the Choroti culture shows traces of an incipient degeneration. On the other hand, in the description I have given before of a Mataco dance performed to conjure disease demons and in which the sorcerers had ostrich feathers fastened to the ankles, wrists, head, and waist,[1]) the »mystic» significance of these »ornaments» is quite obvious. Similarly, when another writer states that the Mataco in some parts of the Argentine Chaco not only use ostrich plumes as head-ornaments, but also apply them to the face as a sort of beard, which gives them a grotesque and ferocious appearance, or wear them round the wrists in the way of bracelets,[2]) one cannot fail to recognize superstitious motives behind these arrangements.

[1]) See *supra*, p. 137.

[2]) Baldrich, *Las comarcas virgenes*, p. 231.

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Choroti SK6

The *ear-tubes* which are worn as ornaments for instance by the Choroti. Ashluslay and Toba-Pilagá and which consist of wooden plugs or pieces of cane, sometimes of tremendous size, are likewise nothing but magical charms or amulets. This was clearly indicated by the Choroti, who told me that the ear-discs are worn to prevent the evil spirits, the *möhsel*, from penetrating into the ears. Their hugeness and peculiarity is evidently thought to act as a deterrent upon the spirits, and there seems to be the idea that the larger they are the more efficacious.

The Indians of the Pilcomayo use various kinds of *necklaces*, and it seems to be the rule that among the most primitive tribes, such as the Choroti and Ashluslay, they are more worn by men than by women, among the more civilized Tobas again more by women than by men. Speaking of the dress of the Choroti, I mentioned the large and costly kind of necklace consisting of snail's shells elaborately fashioned into small round buttons with a hole drilled in the centre and closely strung together. The necklace, called *lähslehuésle* in the Choroti language, is not only an ornament but at the same time a magical charm. The Choroti no doubt gave me the true explanation of their original significance when they told me that the necklace is a protection against sickness. The evil spirits, according to the idea of these Indians, preferably attach themselves to the throat or the chest, because catarrhs are very common in the Chaco during the dry season. The spirits are believed to enter into the body through the throat or the breast, but this is prevented by the protecting necklace. Hence, when a Choroti Indian sells his necklace or leaves off wearing it, his comrades say that he will most certainly soon fall ill. The same idea I found prevailing among the Mataco-Noctenes of Bolivia, where such ornaments are worn by both sexes. Thus the son of a chief, who was just at the age of puberty, one day appeared painted red in the face with *urucú*, and with a large necklace which covered the neck and the breast. When I asked the father why his son had put on these things, he answered: »It is in order that he may not fall ill«. Both among the Mataco and the Choroti it is customary that children of both sexes go totally naked up to the age of eight to ten years, but nearly always they wear collars and facial paintings which most certainly are not »ornaments« in the civilized sense of the word.

Among the South American Indians in general it is a common custom to tie round a limb, for instance the wrist or the leg, a leather strap or some other kind of band, professedly with a view to making the arm or the leg strong. The Chaco Indians also commonly wear such ligatures

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and they are not even meant to be decorations. Among the Choroti it was no rare thing to see old men and women — especially when they were suffering from some pulmonary catarrh or cough, or from rheumatism — wearing a cord or strap bound tightly round the chest. The idea appeared to be that the demon who had entered into the chest and caused the evil should be forced to leave the body or at least prevented from penetrating further. On one occasion I met an old woman whose right forearm had been paralyzed, probably through a fit of apoplexy. She had a dirty woollen band tied round the arm at the wrist, and when I wanted to remove the useless thing, she would not allow it, declaring that it was »good». I soon learnt that the arm had been seized by an evil *möhsek*, and realised that the band was »good» as a sort of charm against the demon. Just as civilized people may, in a case of snake-bite, apply a ligature or cord round the bitten limb above the wound so as to prevent the poison from spreading, so the Indians consider such ligatures as preventive of evil spirits. Among the Choroti the band is not put on with any ceremonies, but probably the material itself is supposed to have some mysterious power. However this may be, in these cords or bands tied round the breast or the arms, we have, I think, the most simple specimens of bracelets, girdles, and other magical ornaments of the same type used by the Indians.

In addition to the magical ornaments here touched upon the Chaco Indians use various kinds of amulets and charms consisting of the tusks or claws of the jaguar or other wild animals, in feathers of birds, mussel shells etc., but I shall not dwell upon this side of the practical religion of the Indians. What I have still to pay particular attention to are their funeral rites and ceremonies.

They were as close to the patient as possible and were muttering a low and monotonous chant, marking the rhythm with movements of their bodies. The medicine-man sang in a loud voice and shook rhythmically at regular intervals a belt from which hung hoofs and metal rattles. He brought his instrument quite close to the possessed woman then pulled it back against himself. At a certain moment he pressed the girl's legs with his arms and let the bells tinkle behind her. The poncho was suddenly taken away and the possessed girl burst into tears. I could then observe that she was richly attired and dressed in red. On her head were several broad red belts to which were sewn shell discs. Around her neck and across her breast she wore some collars made of shells and white glass beads in a meshlike pattern.

The medicine-man got up, with the assistance of the spectators, and blew with all his strength on the body of the possessed woman. Instead of becoming quiet she sobbed harder than ever and threw herself into the arms of one of her aunts. Each time she behaved in this manner the medicine-man blew and shook his rattle. As she seemed to be about to fall into a swoon they let her sit down carefully and at her side her relatives sat speaking kindly to her as though to console or quiet her. Then the girl, her aunts and the medicine-man were covered with the same red poncho, the end of which one of the spectators kept in his hand moving it up and down. The medicine-man sang his vociferous chant and shook his bells against his patient once more.

When the poncho was removed I noticed that the woman seemed calmed. She was leaning her head against the shoulder of one of her aunts and nobody spoke. After a while she started to complain again. The medicine-man immediately shook his bells and his assistants consoled her in low voices. One of the women took away all her ornaments, folded them carefully and put them into a bag. Those present remained sitting for some time without uttering a word. The silence was broken only by the medicine-man blowing

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

on the sick woman. Then, as she seemed to have quited down, they started smoking and talking together. The possessed woman even accepted a cigarette.

Observations made by natives during the performance: The adornments are worn by the patient on behalf of the spirit who is fond of the colors. The songs and the noise of the bells are also intended to please the spirit who, charmed by the ornaments and the noise, gets quieter and leaves the patient.

During this treatment another group of about eight Indians were participating in a similar ceremony. They were dancing around a kind of improvised altar which consisted of a stick surrounded by four smaller ones forming a cross. The central stick was topped by palm leaves, the ends of which were wrapped in paper strips painted red. The four other sticks bore palm leaves painted red with the ends cut off. These sticks were inserted into wooden stands painted alternately red and black and connected in pairs by transverse rods. The whole structure was resting on some rags. A rolled poncho belonging to the medicine-man had been laid near the central stick. The ground for the ceremony had been carefully swept. According to my informant the central stick contained the injurious element which had caused the disease. That stick was supposed to be loaded with bad influences and I was warned not to touch it.

The dancers wore different costumes. Two of them had belts of ostrich feathers, and feather wreaths on their heads. In addition they wore bells and rattles on their breasts, around their loins and their ankles. Around their necks they wore necklaces of sea shells and in one hand they held a bunch of ostrich feathers. The other dancers wore their ordinary clothes with the exception of their headbands and the bells and feathers they wore on their ankles.

When I arrived they were dancing in a circle around the altar, from right to left, looking straight ahead. Their dance step might be defined as a jerky jog-trot. They accompanied

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7

584 make their appearance, and having studied the chosen cavalier join him in the
836 dance, holding him by the shoulder or around his body (Fig. 2). Either during or
[535] immediately after the dance the girl draws away her elected partner, taking him as a rule to the house of her parents.

302 The introduction to a pre-marital sexual relation can naturally take place in
832 some other manner. It often happens that a young man desiring a sweetheart paints a particular pattern on his face, a large red oval or circle containing small white spots on both cheeks. Everybody then knows that he is seeking a girl, and he is called *kyutihll*. The day after, perhaps even the same day, a girl will be seen painted with the same pattern. She is called *sawatlauk*, because by her painting she indicates that she accepts him. This method also shows that it is the girl who
836 makes the choice. He makes himself available both at the nightly dance and by painting himself, and she is free to accept him or to refrain from so doing. I was
[558] assured many times that a young man so selected has no chance of excusing him-
[548] self; he would lose face if he attempted to do so, and would call down upon him-
[182] self the anger of the girl's family. A young man who is not chosen by a girl despite his wish can in the meantime console himself with one of the village prostitutes, who appear to have precisely this function, as extra-marital infidelity with a prostitute is regarded as valid unfaithfulness.

301 It has already been mentioned that young men and women seeking love can
832 often be recognized by the painting of their faces and by a general urge to adorn themselves. Also restricted to this period are a special broad armlet made of black and white beads, and—particularly for the girls—an ordinary white string of beads from which depend red woollen cords with bead tassels that hang down the
832 neck (Fig. 1). Young men who seek or have just found a sweetheart, traditionally
[533] evince great musicality, and are practically the only ones who play the Jew's harp
[534] and a primitive musical bow. The music gives expression to longing and un-
[304] requited love. Young couples have a special form of caress, pressing the cheek of their partners with the points of their nails. This leaves behind small wounds visible for a week or more, and is proof of great infatuation.

836 When a girl has found a sweetheart no secret is made of the fact; at all events all the young people in the village will be aware of the various short-lived unions that have begun. But when she brings her lover home at night to her parents' house they nevertheless evince a form of discretion. The parents pretend to be asleep whilst the young ones creep in; but the father, as though by chance, may cause the fire to blaze up so that he can see whom the girl has chosen. He then lies down to rest. It is often said of a young couple who in this way commence intimate relations that "they have begun to be married". This means that they have
583 836 commenced a kind of trial marriage the result of which is far from certain. The
[581] girl has primarily chosen her sweetheart on the basis of an undefined mixture of
[582] sexual attraction and other propensities, whereas the girl's parents wish to limit the choice to those economically acceptable. Early the next morning the new

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7

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Fig. 1.—Ready and eager for love this Mataco girl carries the red woollen string with head-tassels on her back. Phot. Fock.

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son-in-law will be awakened by the girl's father and be given orders to go out and fish or hunt. Should he be unfortunate and return empty-handed, he can count on being sent home to his parents the same afternoon, and the connexion is broken. If, on the other hand, the young man has any luck he is allowed to continue with the girl for the time being. A day or so later he will take her out with him to search for food. He will, for example hunt and look for honey, and she will collect *cavagnati* leaves. They go a long way, and she tries to fill the *yica*,

[222]
[415]

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755 554 a storm lamp, a lance, and a gun. A little farther away fires were prepared for cooking foods destined for the illness and a bucket of water for the dancers. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent on a bale of hay and some old cloths, dressed in her best clothes and covered with ritual ornaments. [292] [301] [302] The five medicine men were also adorned; they were wearing feather belts, rattles, colonial helmets, /215/ and other precious objects; the entire lower part of their faces was daubed with black. There were also about 20 dancers, dressed up in 755 554 535 feathers, red belts decorated with shells, rattles, caps, red cloths, whistles, and old broken watches; about 10 old women were running around with pieces of cloth in their hands, and one of them with an umbrella. Everyone, including the sick woman, danced and sang; sometimes the medicine men and the sick woman stopped, and the medicine men blew on her; then the dance was resumed. After some time the chief medicine man blew on his bone flute and the dance stopped outright. The sick woman danced by herself, slowly lifting one foot, then the other, three or four centimeters above the ground, and staying in one place; during this time, two medicine men were shaking their rattles, a man was tapping in his hands, laughing, and another was shaking two flat, tin bottles — in which powder is sold in the interior of Argentina — filled with seeds; this lasted about ten minutes, and then the medicine 755 554 men joined in the dance, but only for a short time. After a stop two of them approached the sick woman and began to take off her things; during this time a medicine man was shaking his rattles along the woman's body, beginning with the head. Slowly all the ornaments were taken off, the assistants tapped the ground on the spot where they had fallen, then, running, they went to throw them outside; having gathered them together they shook them several times, and then carefully arranged them. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent and given something to drink. The ceremony was interrupted and then continued.

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433 They do not work, plant, or do anything similar; they
222 are but mediocre fishermen and barely hunters. To live they
241 lay up great stocks of chañar, algarrobas, and mistol fruits, and with some gourd seeds placed under the earth they have extraordinary harvests if the year is moderately rainy.

786 They organize their orgies when the algarrobas, chañar,
578 and mistol are in season, and then the quarrels and murders occur
682 among the men; these crimes go unpunished by the authorities, for there are none. But if the one who has perished had relatives they will take revenge.

342 /320/ They do not bother to build houses or such things.
513 They make a kind of oven; for it they bend some branches of small trees, fix them to the ground, cover these branches with straw or grass, and they sleep underneath in a pile in the company of their dogs.

164 This is the reason for the excessive mange which kills
515 them and makes them look so disgusting, since they are not at all partisans of the daily bath, as the Chiriguano are, and when they do bathe, they roll about in the river sand or in the ashes of their oven-houses.

584 They do not seek the consent of their parents for marriage
585 nor do they have ceremonies. Do two young persons, a man and a woman, love each other? They leave the common settlement, go to the woods, stay a few weeks, and then return, now married, to live with their in-laws or to make another oven like the one of their elders.

586 Young people divorce each other easily, but they are
152 more constant than the Chiriguano in married life. Nonetheless,
837 the women are very jealous and do not readily consent to their
593 husbands' being with other women; for this reason they keep them content with the work of bringing them much fruit from the forest and caressing them.

302 Men and women cut their hair; some of them stain their
301 faces and pierce their ear lobs, in which they put a piece of wood, like the Toba, but this is not a distinctive mark of the race.